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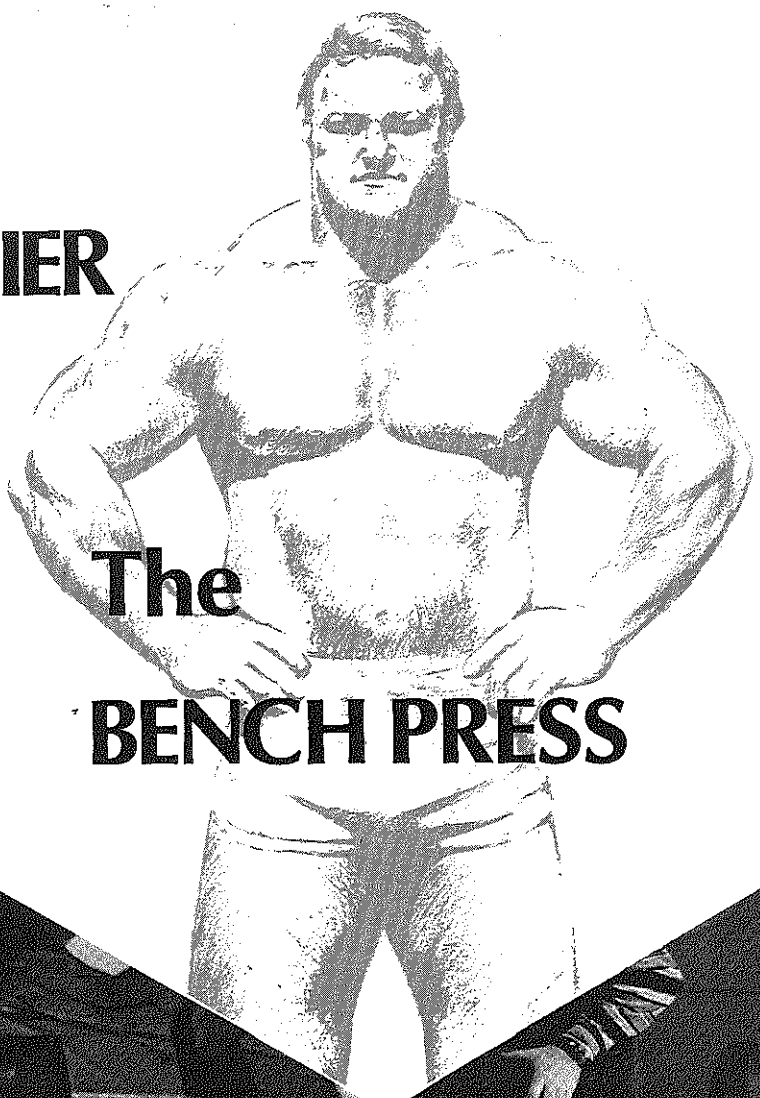
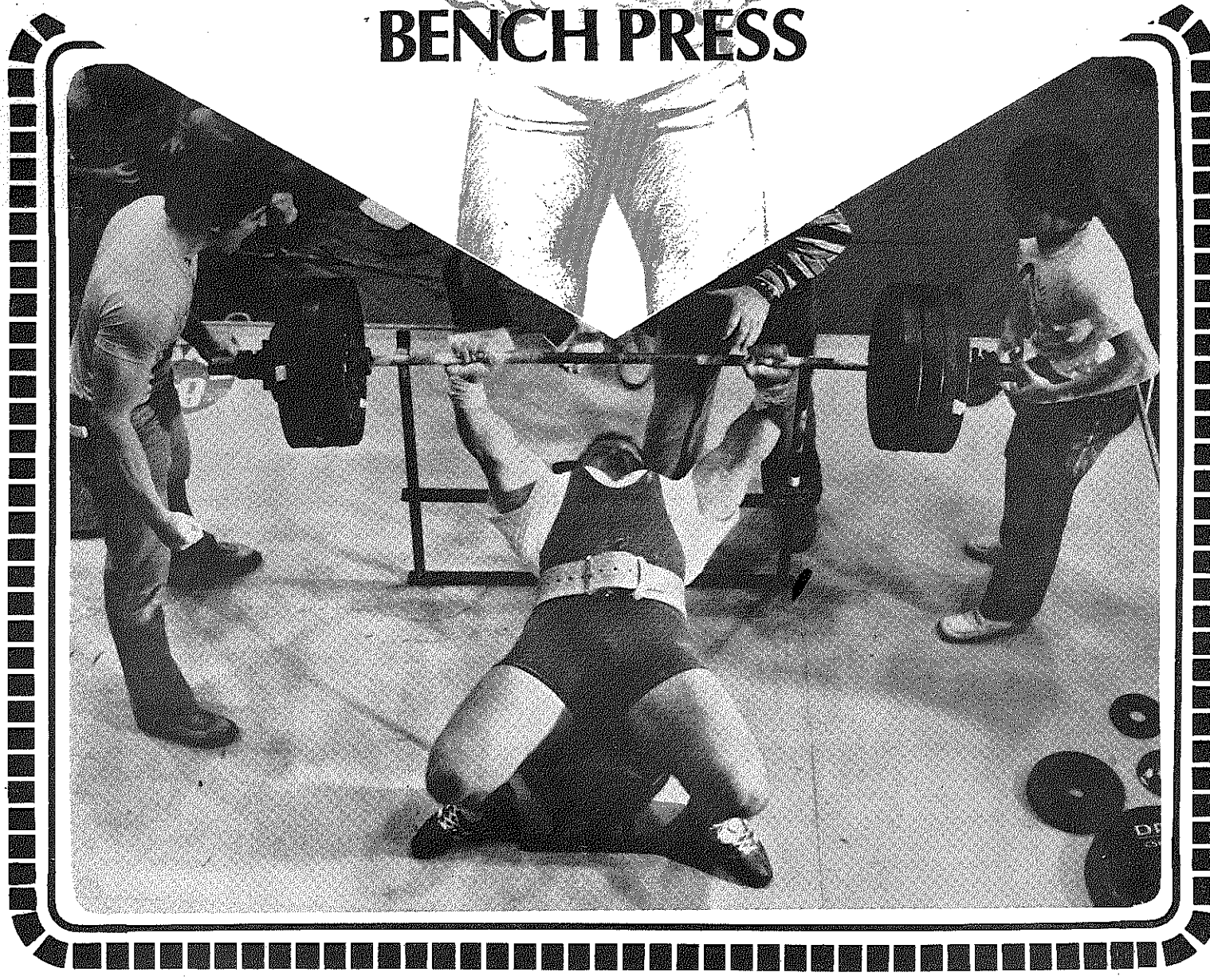
# BILL KAZMAIER &



# The BENCH PRESS



## INTRODUCTION

Bench Pressing is THE most popular weight resisted exercise performed, yet few achieve or even approach the results they are capable of. Too often training systems and techniques are emphasized incorrectly resulting in stagnation and slow progress. Regardless of whether one has natural bench pressing talents or not everyone has the ability for great advancements if you apply yourself correctly. Proficiency and maximum improvement is attained through diligent and consistent training on the right program.

The program and details outlined in these pages are the product of much thought, distillation of ideas and principles, and personal trial. A multitude of training methods, assistance exercises and workout philosophies boiled down to a program that I now use with total conviction and recommend with the same assured confidence to the beginner, intermediate or top caliber lifter alike, interested in increasing their bench press.

By following this program and adopting the philosophies described will not only increase your bench press but will also promote excellent upper body development as the two should, and do, go side by side. The bench press is an interesting exercise and challenge, an enjoyable exercise, and one of the most gratifying ones. Take your incentive from my own results, understand and believe the principles and enjoy the progress you make—Train hard and begin to feel good.

With Confidence,

Bill Kazmaier

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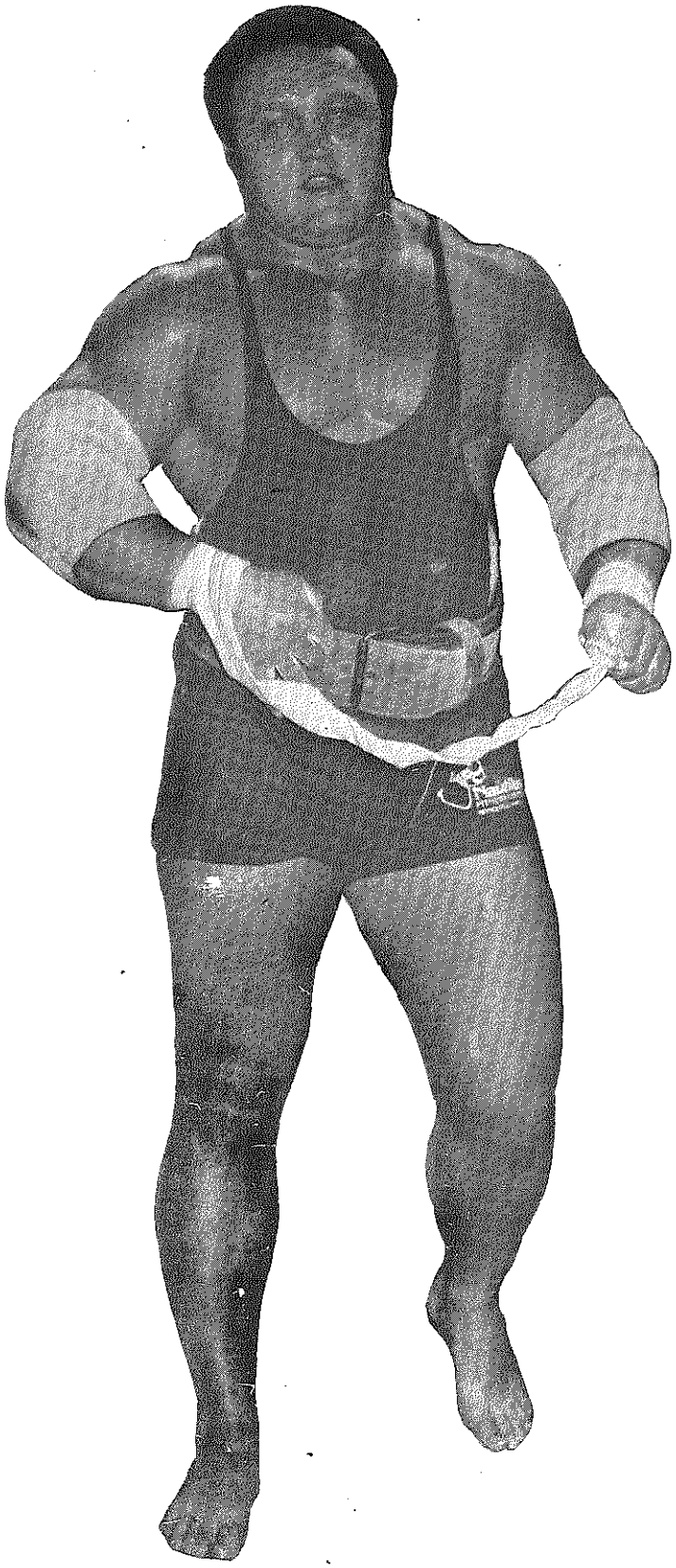


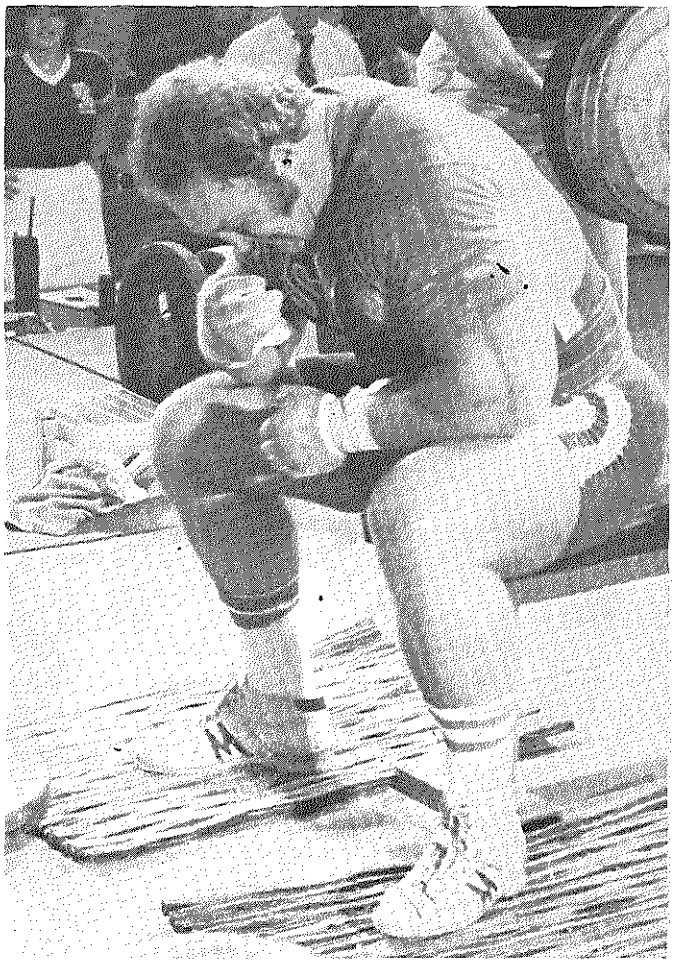
This bench pressing program is not just one of specialization, it can be incorporated easily into a powerlifting framework, bodybuilding routing or strength training regimen. With details explained later it is based on a four phase cycle lasting around 16 weeks, though this duration can be varied. However, a bench pressing program should not merely be a list of exercises, sets and repetitions, there are many farther reaching aspects to be considered. I will endeavor, in these pages, to explain in detail each and every relevant aspect that I feel is important in guiding lifters along the path of greater bench pressing ability and upper body development. My concepts and philosophies on bench pressing vary considerably from those expressed by others. I feel it is therefore essential to explain these philosophies now for emphasis and in so doing possibly denounce some popular misconceptions.

To encapsulate my training philosophy would be to say "train hard and fast", but there is much more involved than can be explained in that short phrase. Primarily you need to divorce yourself from a preoccupation with maximal weights, be it singles or low repetitions, where weight and not work is the motivator. Constantly testing yourself with maximal poundages is a self-indulgent step into staleness, slow gains and discouragement. Believe in the notion that if you build useful muscle greater strength will accompany it. FOR 75% TO 80% OF THE TIME THE KEY WORK IN BENCH PRESS TRAINING IS **INTENSITY**—WORKING FOR SPEED AND MUSCLE EXHAUSTION, INCREASING WEIGHTS GRADUALLY ONCE THEY HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED SATISFACTORILY. Consistency of this approach, performing smooth and proficient sets and repetitions over a long period of time, will build the muscular basis for substantial strength gains and ward against premature peaking and staleness.

Only in the last four weeks of the overall cycle should poundage take over as the prime motivator. During this period believe in the ground work you have laid and expect rapid gains in the poundages capable of being handled from workout to workout, but always, know yourself and listen to the messages your body is giving you—don't over-extend yourself and get discouraged. Intuitively you should know your capabilities, be reasonable and honest with yourself and you will realize your true immediate potential and develop a perfect working relationship with yourself to promote even greater advancements in the future.

## BENCH PRESSING STYLE AND TECHNICALITIES

The basic concept of lying on a bench and taking a bar from arm's length to the chest and back is a very simple one. However, bench pressing with maximum efficiency and power is an extremely exacting art relying on many major and minor principles and utilizing the coordination of the many muscles involved. While there is no one universal style that is perfect for every lifter—hand spacing, degree of arch and foot placement being the most individual variables, there are other aspects that should be applied by all lifters. In this section I would like to consider all these intrinsic aspects of bench pressing technique as correct form is an important feature in increasing bench pressing ability and accompanied muscle growth.



### Psyché

All too often lifters will psyche for the squat and psyche for the deadlift but when it comes to bench pressing it appears that because of the supine nature of the lift their aggression is also flattened. Psyche and aggression for the bench press is as equally important as it is for the other two lifts. Prepare yourself mentally before you approach the bench, don't linger too long on the bench either sitting or in the pressing position, take a firm, tensed hand-off, lower the bar with controlled determination and explode off the chest, fighting all the way to the lock out. Psyche can manifest itself from within or from without, whatever way, be determined and be aggressive for workout sets and competition maximums alike. Respect the bench press and you'll be more respectable at it.

### Grip and Grip Spacing

As mentioned previously, grip spacing is an individual matter, dependant largely upon structure and musculature. The width of the grip governs the relative muscle actions and outputs. A narrow grip requires greater triceps and deltoid strength and less pectoral strength than a wide grip. The maximum grip allowed in competition is 81 cm. or 32 inches measured between the forefingers. I take a 28 inch grip, which is relatively narrow for a lifter my height, but is the one I feel most comfortable with, fearing pectoral tears any wider. In order to make full use of all the involved muscles a wide to medium wide grip is preferable.

On gripping the bar itself the thumbs should be around the bar and not back with the fingers. This permits a tight, secure grip, and allows the bar to be squeezed helping tighten the forearms and upper arms during the lift. With this real grip the wrists can be held extended and rigid allowing a more direct pushing force at the chest.

### Foot Placement

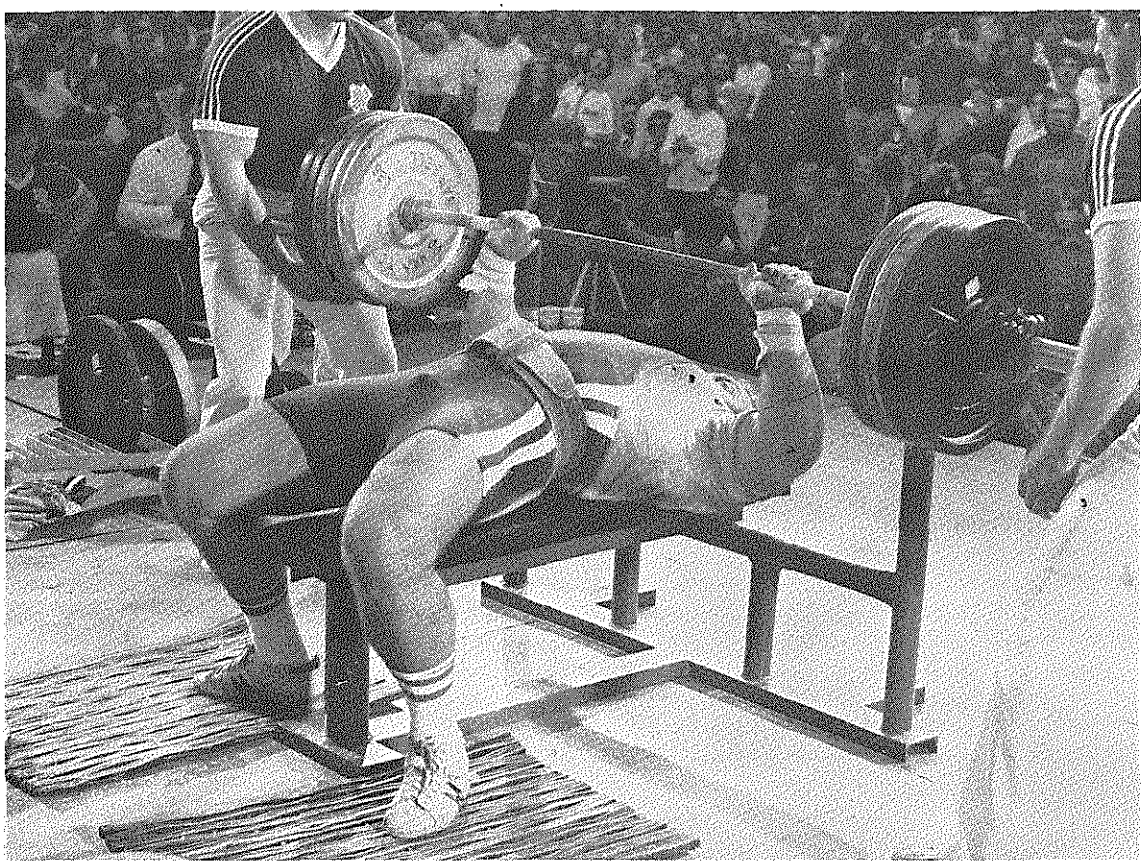
Again an individual arrangement but it's important to realize that most of the body's stabiltiy and a degree of the pushing power comes from the legs. Consequently the feet should be positioned uniformly on each side of the bench in a position that gives the greatest solidity through the legs to the adopted body position without encouraging the buttocks to lift clear of the bench top during the lift. Consider this carefully and build the platform up with secure plates or blocks to achieve the most powerful position.

### Body Position/Arch

Along with grip spacing and foot placement arching is the third area in bench pressing technique that may vary from individual to individual. The degree of arch that a person can achieve is dictated somewhat by a person's anatomy. One reason for arching is to raise the chest higher, thereby lessening the distance the bar is pressed. By arching the back the chest is pushed higher promoting the pectoral muscles to the greatest degree of work and therefore would more naturally accompany wider grip bench presses than ones performed with a more moderate

grip. Generally, the heavier the lifter the less ability there is in acquiring an arch, nevertheless, it's important to feel compact. Again, never arch to the extent that the buttocks are in jeopardy of raising clear of the bench top during the lift.

Regarding body position there are some obvious but nonetheless important points to observe. The body should always be distributed evenly on the bench for maximum stability; and at a position sufficiently close to the uprights so that the adopted body position can be maintained while securing the grip and hand-off, but not so close that the bar might touch any part of the uprights while it is being pressed.



**Bench Dimensions**

Having just considered foot and body position it's an appropriate point to mention bench height and width. The present International Powerlifting Federation (I.P.F.) rules state only height, 45 cm. or 18 inches, and one width, 30 cm. or 12 inches, as being mandatory at all sanctioned meets. Many gym benches will be lower than this, some may be higher with greater or lesser widths also. Be aware of this and make the necessary adjustments. Never get accustomed to a bench top that's too high, build the platform up under the feet with secure plates or blocks, nor one that's too low without assuming the same height in a meet by again building the platform up. Also variations in width can create balance problems in a meet, try to use a bench 12 inches wide. Be aware of these points and always check, because a meet is sanctioned, does not guarantee that the bench will meet the I.P.F. mandate!

**Position Of The Bar Over The Chest**

Having assumed a stable and compact position on the bench, feet positioned correctly, and taken a grip on the bar at the width best suited, maintain a firm and tensed condition as the bar is being handed to you from the racks. Take the bar, not over the throat or upper chest, but right over the crown of the chest before having it steadily realeased by the spotter(s). This position would interpret when standing upright that the arms would be parallel to the floor, or vertically, at a position about an inch higher than the nipples. It's important to be in a position at arm's length that affords the most control and least deviation when lowering the bar to the chest.

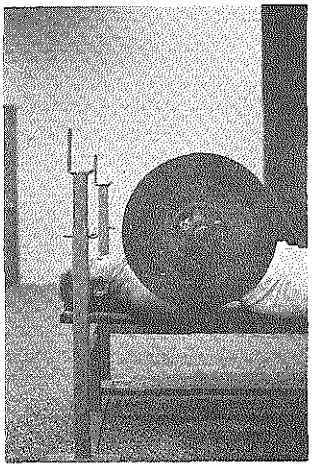
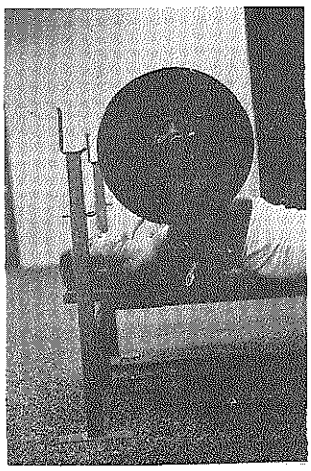
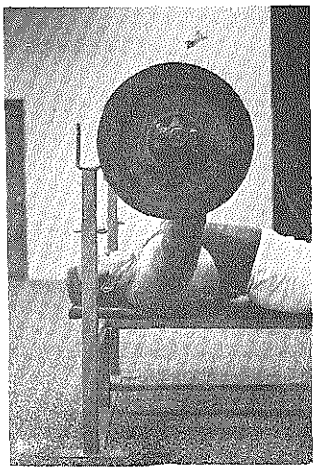
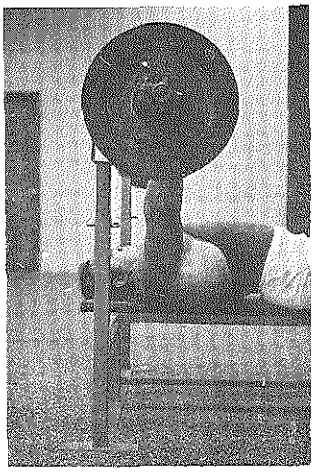
**Lowering The Bar**

From the above position, inhale deeply and lower the bar slowly and with complete control to a position no higher than the nipples and preferably one inch below. During the descent the emphasis is on control so as to make certain the bar is in exactly the correct starting position. With myself the bar is lowered with a maximum acceleration of no more than 103% of the actual weight of the bar, which translates for a bench press of 600 pounds, that on the way down the weight never exceeds 618 pounds when acceleration is taken into account. Most weight trainees lower the bar with an acceleration equal to 130% to 140% of the actual weight of

the bar, which again for a 600 pound bench press translates as 780 to 840 pounds or 390 to 420 pounds for a 300 pound bench press. Hence the importance of a slow controlled descent. To achieve this control keep all the muscles tight, paying special attention to forearms, upper arms, deltoids, pectorals, lats, and legs. Tuck the elbows in towards the lats so that the triceps come into contact with them to sustain this condition of inertia—resistance to acceleration, and to be in the strongest possible pressing position. Again, keep the wrists as upright as possible and you will be in a perfect and solid position to receive the referees signal in a meet or press out a training lift.

**Pressing The Bar**

The overall performance of the press is one of coordination of muscular effort coupled with the correct trajectory or path. From the chest, where little of the weight is supported by the rib cage, but rather held on tensed, "recoil-ready" muscles, the bar is pressed with absolute acceleration by exertion primarily of the pectorals, triceps and the front deltoids, in an upward and faceward direction. This momentum and direction takes the bar to about 60% of completion for the medium grip pressers and about 70% for the wider grips. Initial acceleration is more explosive with the narrower grip but shorter lived. The bar at this point should be over the upper pectorals. At this stage the elbows should begin to flare outwards bringing them almost level with the shoulders utilizing side deltoid strength and maintaining the upward movement with the pectorals and now very importantly the triceps. From this point the bar moves vertically, while exhaling, to lock-out using largely pectoral and triceps. Triceps requirement being greater with a narrower grip. The final position of the bar over the chest will be directly above the upper pectorals or even towards the throat, higher up the body than the position held before lowering the bar. Obviously with repetitions the first should follow the path described while subsequent ones will need minor adjustments at the beginning of the descent to bring the bar back down to the correct pressing position. It's the pathway of the first repetition that lays the foundation for faultless competition singles.

**The Head**

During bench pressing the head does not play an insignificant role. Once the bar has been correctly positioned over the chest your eyes should be focused on the point of the chest where the bar will come to rest. The bar will be in the outskirts of the eyes vision and neck tensed as the bar is lowered and brought more into focus as it reaches the chest. The head should be on the bench but not pressing into it. Pushing backwards into the bench top with the back of the head comes with the explosion off the chest, with the eyes (if open) following the bar's progress.

So, that's bench pressing technique step by step, picking up on every detail. Once it becomes automatic you will be bench pressing with smooth, controlled, consistent and efficient maximum power. Reviewing this again, highlighting the main features, would serve well as a closing paragraph.

Take hand-off to a tight position over the crown of the chest, a slow controlled descent tucking the elbows in towards the body and compacting the triceps on the lats, holding most of the weight on tensed muscles. Muscular coordination is the main principle in the press. Pectorals, deltoids, and triceps make the initial upwards and backwards explosion off the chest as the elbows move outwards concentrating the onus of the lock-out on the pectorals and triceps.

## ASSISTANCE EXERCISES

From the discussion on bench pressing technique and the muscular coordination indicated it follows which muscles will be involved in supplemental work—Pectorals, Deltoids, Forearms, Biceps, Triceps, and Lats.

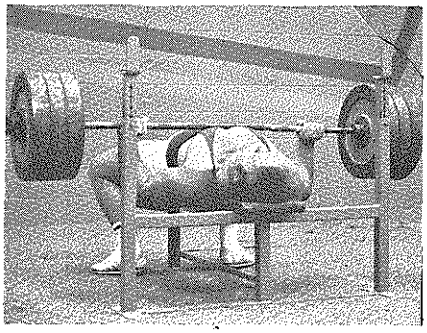
In an attempt to present the program details as clearly as possible, the assistance exercises for each muscle group will first be described as far as reason, performance and technique is concerned and then included in the overall program with sets and repetitions explained.

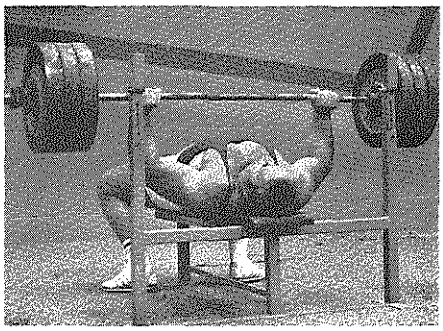
PECTORALS

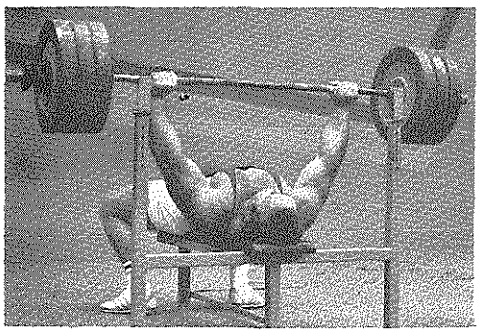
The bench press is the lift with which we are concerned and is the best builder and in itself the best supplemental exercise when done with variations. The variations are:

**Wide Grip Bench Press**

Bench presses performed with a grip no wider than 34 inches and not much less than 32 inches (the competition limit). A lifter who's competition grip is 32 inches would go out to 34 inches while someone with a 28 inch grip like my own would go out to 32 inches, only lifters with short arms would go much less. Remember, you are working for muscle exhaustion, make the muscles work and don't cheat this effort by raising the hips.

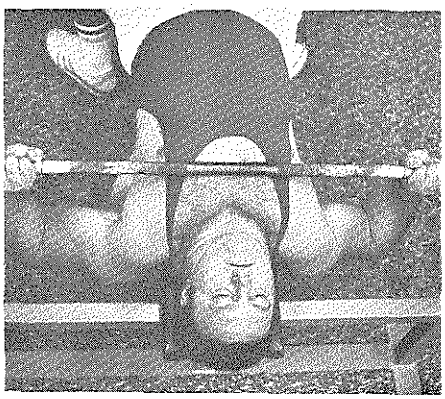




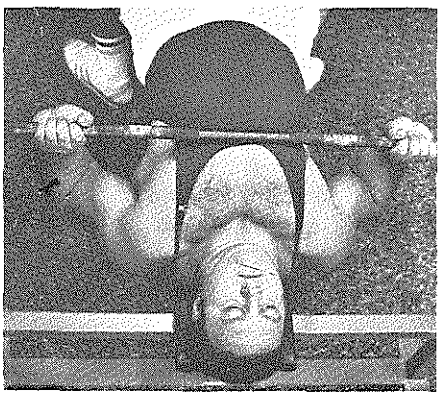


**Bench Press—Varying Bar Position on Chest**

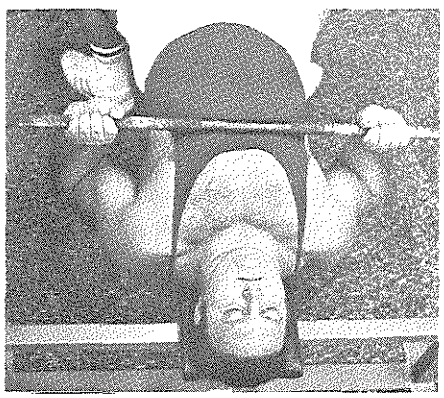
Performed with either a wide grip or competition grip. It entails lowering the bar to three different positions on the chest—high (upper pectoral), medium (mid pectoral) and low (competition position or slightly lower). The first set is lowered high on the chest, second set to the mid position and third set to the low position. Again work rapidly and strictly.



High on Chest
Also illustrating, Wide Grip



Mid Chest
Normal/Competition Grip



Low on Chest
Narrow Grip

**Narrow Grip Bench Press**

Bench presses performed with a narrower than competition grip but not overly narrow. Never less than 16 inches, as it then become more of a triceps exercise. The arms should never be quite locked out during repetitions, toe maximize the pectoral work, and lowered to approximately the same point as a competition lift. Emphasis once again is on working to exhaustion and maintaining body position.

With all these assistant bench press movements, the bar should be lowered with control and performed smoothly. Breathing is not necessary every repetition, a second breath being needed perhaps mid way through the set, and perhaps one final gasp before the final repetition. In training I often wear rubber elbow pads to keep the joint warm.

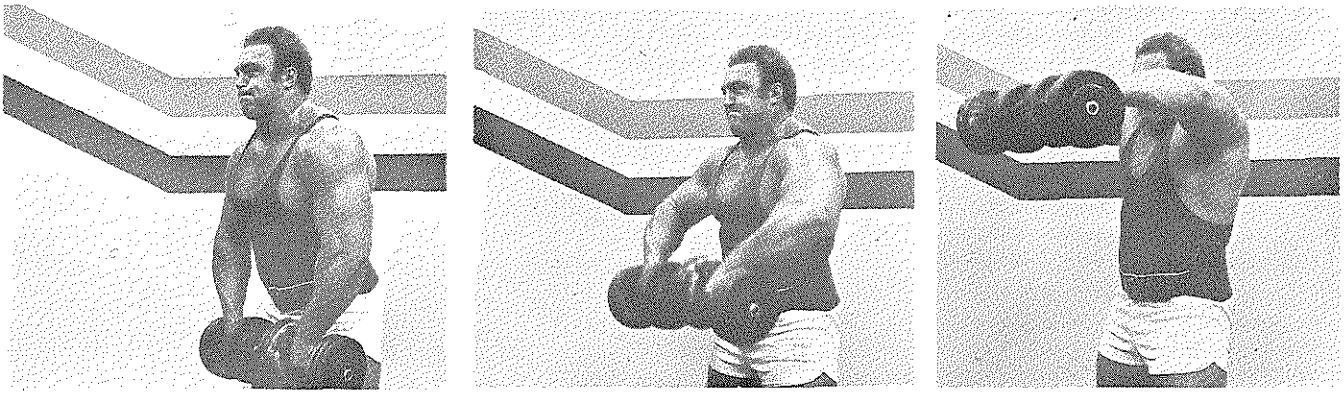
**Deltoids**

The deltoids are used more in bench pressing than often given credit for. The front deltoids especially are instrumental in the drive off the chest and in controlling the bar in it's continued movement upward and toward the face. The side deltoids come into play as the elbows move outwards toward the shoulder line, and work on the rear deltoids is important to maintain a strength balance in the shoulder girdle so helping to prevent shoulder injuries.

The exercises I prefer in working these muscle groups are front deltoid raises and side lateral raises with dumbells and tennis backhand cable extensions.

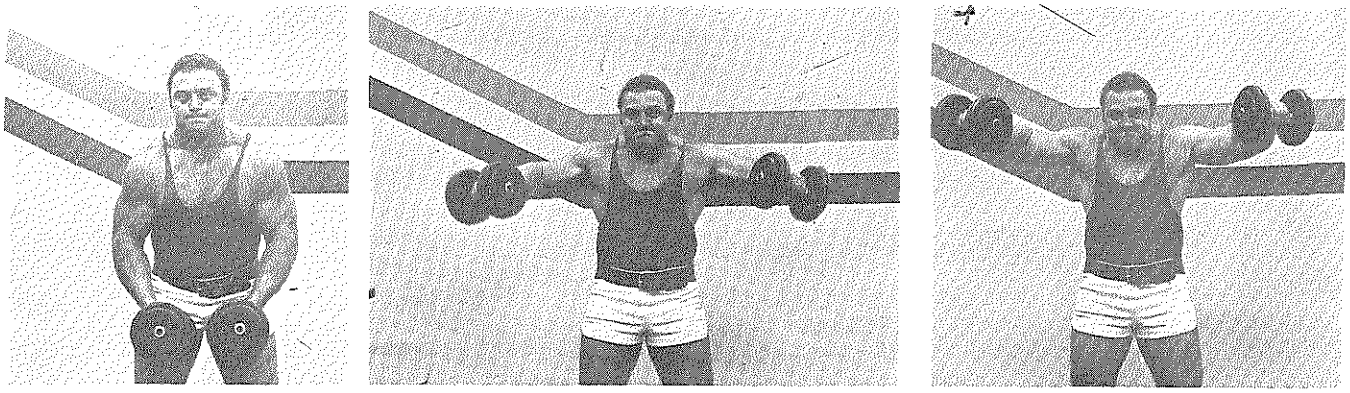
**Front Deltoid Raise**

Raising the dumbells simultaneously with hands maintained in the knuckles up position, raise them slightly above shoulder height. While the exercise should be performed with a degree of strictness fairly heavy weights should also be built up to.



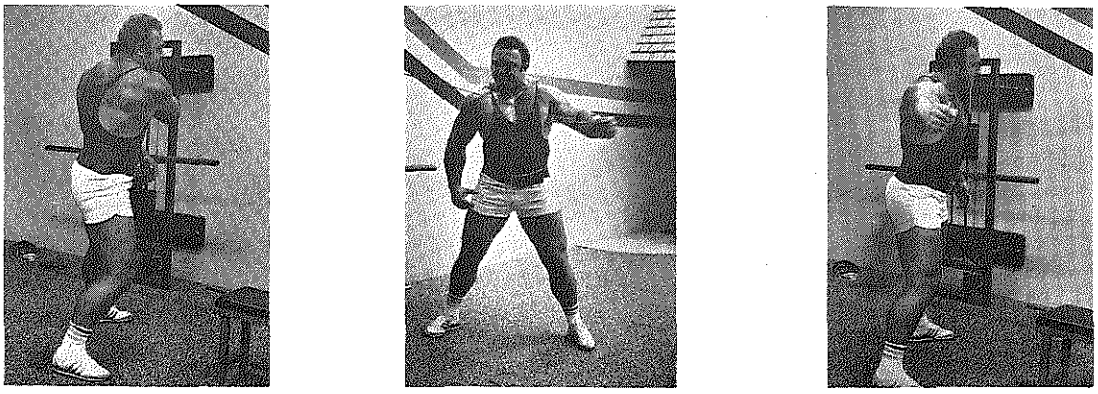
**Lateral Raise**

A stricter movement than the forward raise, slightly twisting the back of the dumbells upwards as they reach shoulder level and controlling them as they are lowered.



**Tennis Backhand Cable Extension**

For the rear deltoids I prefer the more direct resisistance of cables. Keep the elbow just partially unlocked throughout the whole exercise and pull from across the body to full lateral extension. Bent over lateral dumbell raises are a good alternative if cables are not available.



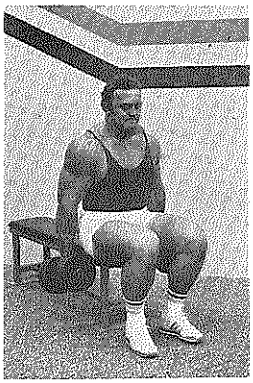
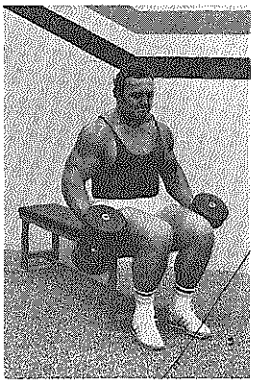
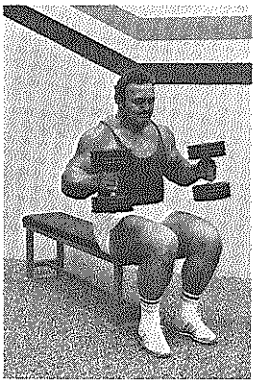
All of the shoulder work should be performed without too much rest, with intensity and singlemindedness.

FOREARMS/BICEPS

The importance of this combination of muscle groups is that they tighten up on each other as the bench press is lowered. As already emphasized this tightness is important to bench pressing success. To achieve this I use three exercises, most importantly the seated hammer curl and also the standing curl with an E-Z-Bar and concentration curl.

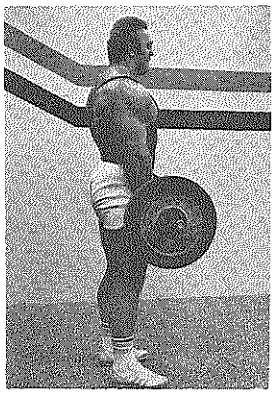
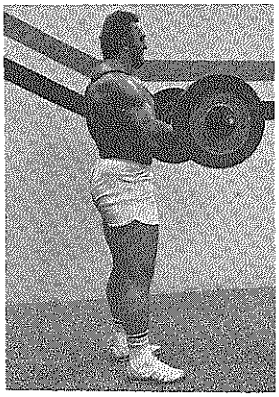
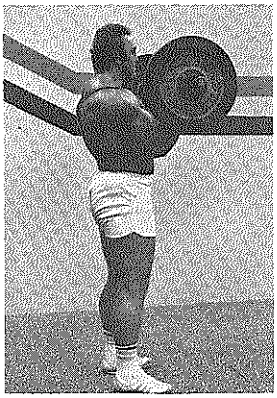
**Seated Hammer Curl**

Performed sitting on the end of a bench, the dumbells held with weights/thumbs forward. Curl the dumbells, maintaining their forward position and without excessive movement of the upper arm, to about ¾ of the possible movement and lower with control. Heavy weights should be built up to.

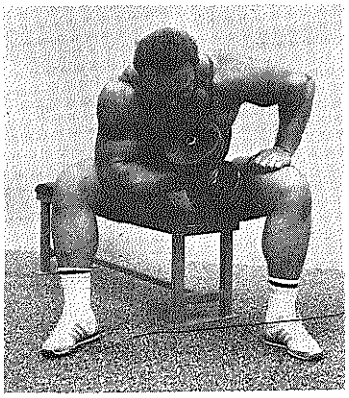
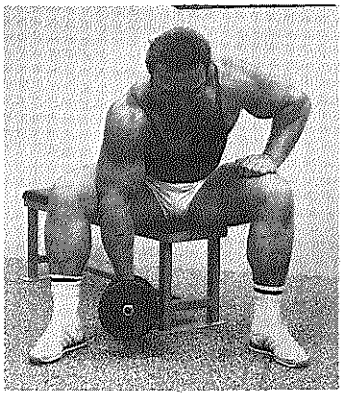
**Standing Curl**

A normal strict standing bicep curl using an E-Z-Bar.

**Concentration Curl**

Performed seated with the elbow tucked against the thigh just above the knee. Curl the dumbell to produce maximum contraction of the biceps and lower slowly. Work both arms alternately with little rest.

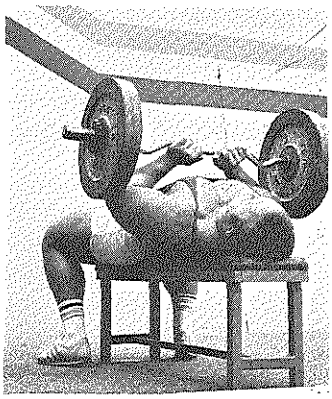
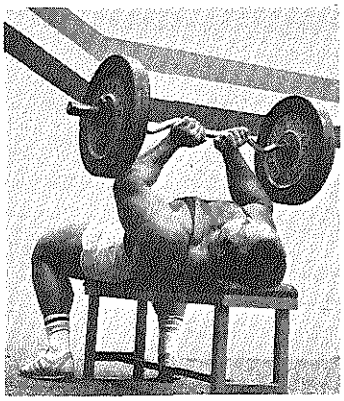
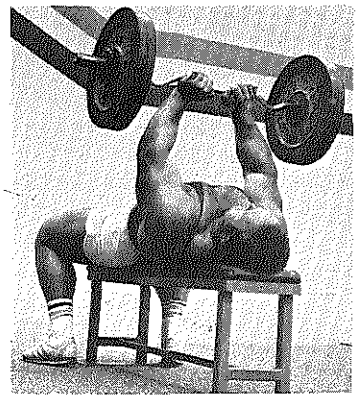
TRICEPS

Triceps strength can often be the deciding factor in locking out a heavy bench press, and is therefore of premier importance and worthy of the most conscientious and exhaustive effort. I use a total of three exercises, though two of these are alternated for reasons I will explain. The main exercise used is the lying tricep push on

an E-Z-Bar. The other two being the prone tricep extension and tricep pushdown. The prone tricep extension is notorious for causing elbow problems and pain because of the intense stress placed on the fulcrum—the elbow. It's an excellent tricep exercise but rather than endure elbow pain I use it only once per week, and moderately light at that, alternating it with the pushdown. If you have any untoward pain from performing this exercise I would recommend using only the pushdown.

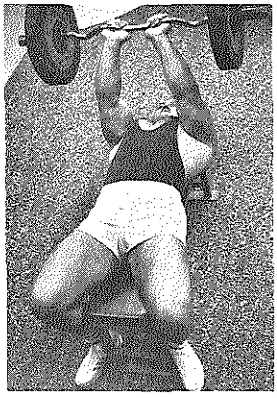
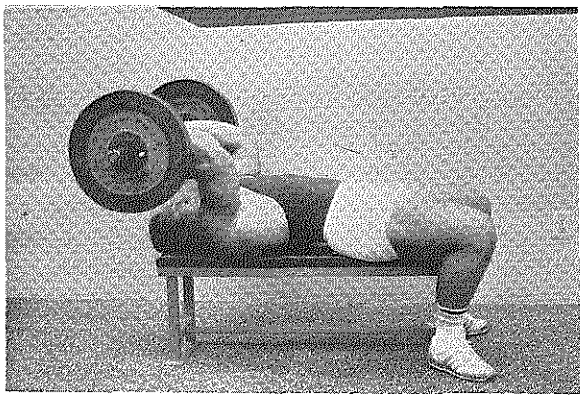
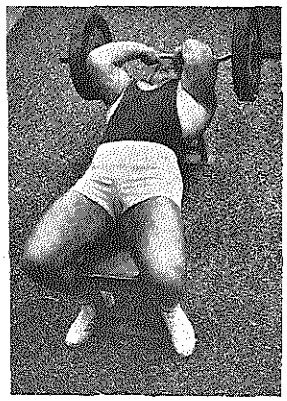
**Lying Tricep Push**

Using an E-Z-Bar, and keeping the elbows close to the body, the exercise consists of a push from a position just off the chest to not quite locking the arms out, keeping the triceps under constant tension.

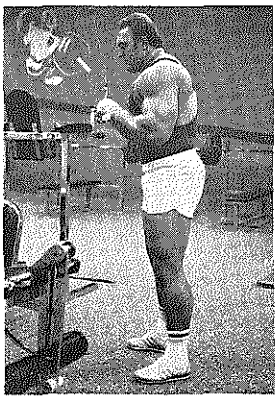
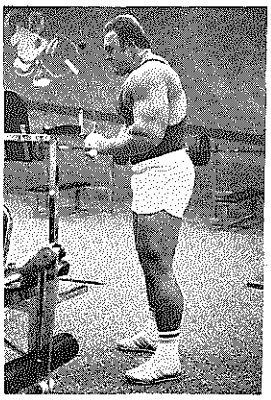
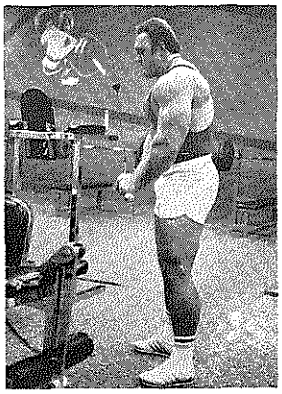
**Prone Tricep Extension**

Performed using an E-Z-Bar with upper arms maintained in the vertical posistion and elbows tucked in as the bar is lowered to the top of the head and arms then re-extended.

**Tricep Pushdown**

A very deliberately performed pushdown using a lat machine.

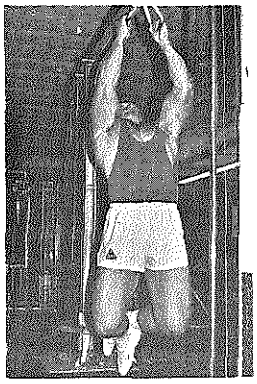
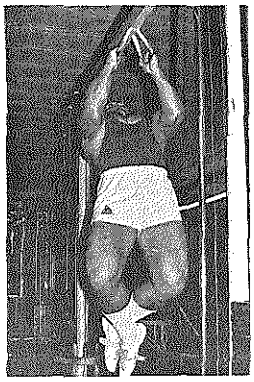
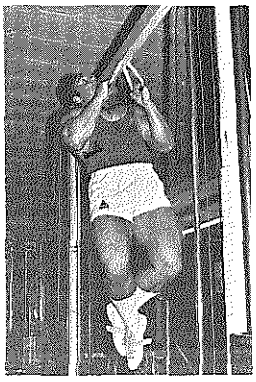




LATS

The lats should form the main base off which the bench press gains its initial impetus off the chest and the better the start the greater the drive. The lats can absorb a lot of work so it's important to work them hard. Also, no matter how isolated a lat exercise may be the biceps and forearms are also worked, and moreover, worked in an action similar to the bench pressing movement, giving the exercises a twofold importance. The exercises I prefer as most effective are the close grip chin, preferably using a V-Bar, the one arm row, a seated rowing movement and wide grip pulldown to the chest.

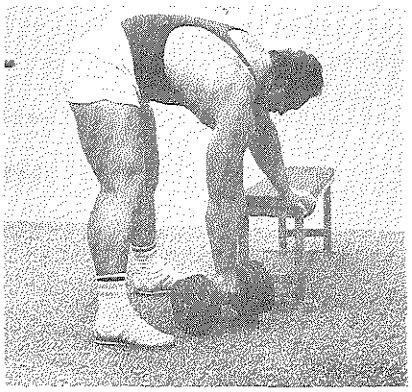
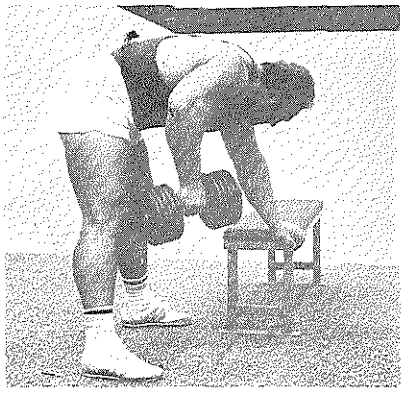
**Close Grip Chins**

A V-Bar provides a better position for performing these chins. Incline the body backwards so that you can pull yourself up and try to connect your hands to your chest, resist on the way down and extend fully. Build up to 15 repetitions before adding weighted resistance.

**One Arm Row**

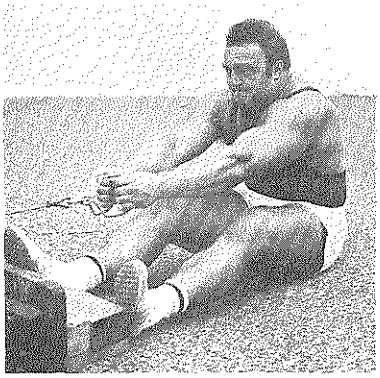
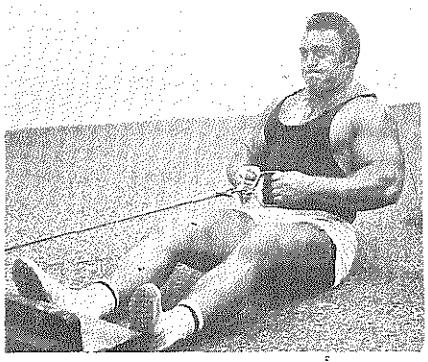
Supporting one hand on a bench in a bent over position pull the dumbell up close to the chest and lower slowly. Twisting the front of the dumbell in at the bottom. Consciously think about working the lats and raise the upper arms as high as possible. Work fast, almost alternating arms without pause throughout.

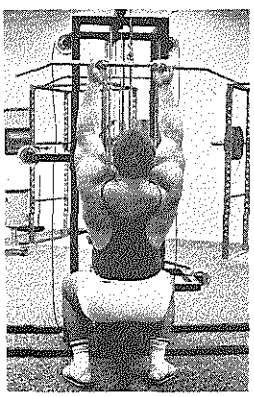
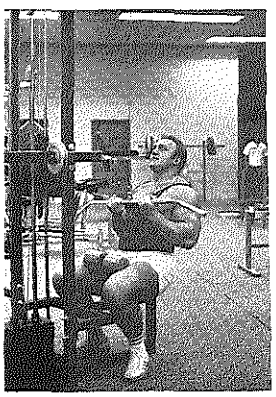



Complete row with arm tucked close into body

**Seated Row**

Requires a pulley arrangement at about waist level when sat on the floor. Secure the feet at an adequate distance from the machine to allow complete tension. Again concentrate on the lats and pull the upper arms to the sides of the chest and well back. A narrow underhand grip pulldown on a normal lat machine can be substituted if the required pulley arrangement is not available.

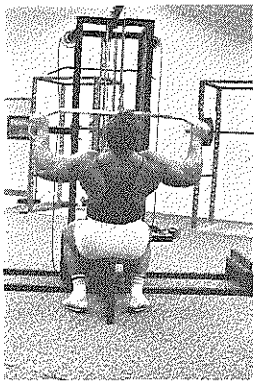



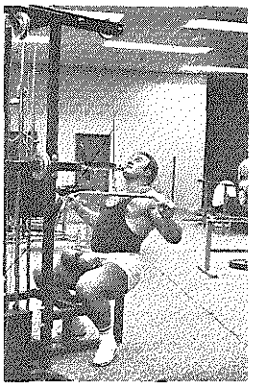



If pulley not available use: Narrow Underhand Grip Pulldown

**Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest**

Performed either seated or kneeling and facing the lat machine. Taking a wide grip pull the bar down, or attempt to, to the position the bar hits the chest in the bench press. Resist the weight on the return and extend fully.





## PROGRAM DETAILS

Having considered in detail the underlying training philosophies, the techniques and the assistance exercises concerned with bench pressing, it is time to lay them out in a detailed program. The whole program is based on a four-day-a-week workout schedule, taken, for myself, on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, although this could obviously be any combination of the same sequence of workout and resting days. Progressing through a 10, 8, 5, 3 and 2 repetition cycle on the bench press, peaking to correspond normally with a contest, it is broken up into four phases, each lasting four weeks, and can be best explained taking each phase individually, from the Base Training Phase through Phases A, B, and C.

BASE TRAINING PHASE (Approximately 4 weeks)

This phase provides the basic groundwork for the cycle and could be extended or reduced in duration to suit individual needs and planning. The emphasis is most certainly on intensity, variation of bar position on chest and assistance work to develop a good muscular basis.

**Monday**

1) Bench Press, competition style and grip. Warm up, then 3x10
2) Wide Grip Bench Press, varying bar position on chest 3x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 3x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 3x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension 3x10

**Tuesday**

1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 2 warm up sets) 6x10
2) Prone Tricep Extension 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Standing Curl 3x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) Seated Row 3x10
7) One Arm Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

**Thursday**

1) Bench Press, competition grip, varying bar position on chest. Warm up, then 3x15
2) Wide Grip Bench Press 3x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 3x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 3x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension 3x10

**Friday**

1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 1 warm up set) 5x15 (Lighter in weight and sets performed faster than Tuesday)
2) Tricep Pushdown 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Standing Curl 4x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) One Arm Row 3x10
7) Seated Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

Again the emphasis is on intensity and speed throughout the workout, **not** on weight, maintaining strict styles nevertheless. Increase all poundages gradually and only after all sets have been achieved fully.

PHASE "A" (4 weeks)

The repetitions on the main bench press sets are reduced, but speed is still an important factor. Again, Monday is the heavier day on bench press with heavy lying tricep push following Tuesday.

**Monday**

1) Bench Press, competition style and grip. Warm up, then 4x8
2) Wide Grip Bench Press, varying bar position on chest 3x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 3x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 4x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension 3x10

**Thursday**

1) Bench Press, competition style and grip. Warm up, then 4x10
2) Wide Grip Bench Press, varying bar position on chest 3x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 3x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 4x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension

**Tuesday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 2 warm up sets) 6x10
2) Prone Tricep Extension 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Standing Curl 3x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) One Arm Row3x10
7) Seated Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

**Friday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 1 warm up set) 5x12 (Lighter than Tuesday's—working for speed)
2) Tricep Pushdown 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Standing Curl 3x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) One Arm Row 3x10
7) Seated Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

PHASE "B"(4 weeks)

The repetitions on the main bench press sets are again reduced but still speed and intensity is important. Monday remains as the heavy day on the bench press with heavy lying tricep push again the following day.

**Monday**
1) Bench Press, competition style & grip, Warm up, then 4x5
2) Wide Grip Bench Press—Lowered to competition position on chest 2x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 2x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 4x8
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension 3x10

**Thursday**
1) Bench Press, competition style & grip, Warm up, then 4x8
2) Wide Grip Bench Press—Lowered to competition position on chest 2x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 2x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 3x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10
6) Tennis Backhand Cable Extension 3x10

**Tuesday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 2 warm up sets) 6x10
2) Prone Tricep Extension 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Concentration Curl 3x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) One Arm Row 3x10
7) Seated Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

**Friday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 1 warm up set) 5x12
2) Tricep Pushdown 4x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Concentration Curl 3x10
5) Close Grip Chins 3xMax
6) One Arm Row 3x10
7) Seated Row 3x10
8) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x10

During this phase of the cycle varying the position of the bar on the chest on some of the bench press sets is dropped so as to concentrate on hitting the correct groove. Front deltoid raises are decreased in repetitions on Monday so that more weight can be handled and work load on this exercise reduced slightly the following Thursday. Concentration curls replace the heavier standing curl to save undue stress on the elbows as the bench press weights increase.

PHASE "C" (4 weeks)

This phase represents the four weeks upto a contest or peak. Poundage building is the primary object on the bench press as work becomes less intense, more rest is taken between sets and the repetitions are lowered to three's and two's. Work on the assistance exercises remains intense while some exercises are omitted and weights should be reduced to concentrate total effort and energy on the heavy bench presses.

**Monday**
1) Bench Press, competition style & grip, Warm up, then 1st week 4x3, 2nd week 3x3, 3rd week 2x3, 4th week 2x2
2) Wide Grip Bench Press—Lowered to competition position on chest 2x10 (Pauses on last 5 reps)
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 2x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 3x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10

**Thursday**
1) Bench Press, competition style & grip, Warm up, then 3x5
2) Wide Grip Bench Press—Lowered to competition position on chest 2x10
3) Narrow Grip Bench Press 2x10
4) Front Deltoid Raise 3x10
5) Lateral Raise 3x10

**Tuesday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 2 warm up sets) 5x10
2) Tricep Pushdown 3x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 4x10
4) Seated Row 4x10
5) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 4x10

**Friday**
1) Lying Tricep Push (Inclusive of 1 warm up set) 4x10
2) Tricep Pushdown 3x10
3) Seated Hammer Curl 3x10
4) Seated Row 3x15
5) Wide Grip Pulldown to Chest 3x15

Obviously during the week just prior to a meet, the last seven days of this cycle, the week's workload will differ. Regardless of how you work your weekly schedule, Monday or Tuesday should be your last heavy bench press workout, following the Phase "C" Monday workout completely, followed by the normal Tuesday workout but with reduced poundages. If the meet is Sunday I would normally add 4 sets of 10 repetitions with light weights (135 to 200 for myself) on the Thursday, other than that the cycle is complete and it's time to prove one's progress with a maximum in the meet.

Throughout this cycle the different phases are merely adaptations of the primary base training phase. Rather than just explain how to gradually work towards a peak I have outlined each transition. Apart from proving a lengthy and in parts repetitious procedure I do feel that by doing this it has allowed the intricacies of change to be more apparent and the intentions more easily understood.

When performing this cycle of workouts there are some important considerations necessary. If you are not

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accustomed to the type of workload in the base training phase start with less sets and gradually build up to the full amount. Exercise good sense in choice of poundages throughout the whole cycle. Remember, until the last four weeks, the accent is on work and intensity not poundage. Wait until all sets can be proficiently accomplished before increasing any weight, and then make only the increases you realistically feel capable of. An understanding of your own capabilities should be quickly learned in respect of how much to increase in poundage when the repetitions drop from 8 to 5, or how much to decrease from this poundage to successfully achieve 2x10 for the wide grip or narrow grip bench presses. Don't over extend yourself as this could lead to frustration and staleness.

VARIATIONS

One of the keys to continued progress is an enthusiastic attitude. Becoming stale on a program affects this enthusiasm adversely. This program is designed to deter against any such retrogression but that does not guarantee that with some lifters it will not happen. As stated earlier, always **listen to the messages your body is giving you.** If on the occasional day you just don't feel up to it, relax and pick up afresh on the next workout day. Don't be afraid to occasionally reduce the number of sets if you are slightly fatigued. If you are not totally comfortable with a certain assistance exercise replace it with one that you prefer that has the same actions or omit one or two if time and energy so dictates but make sure to keep the key assistance exercises—Front deltoid raise, hammer curl, lying tricep push and at least two back exercises as well as all bench pressing movements.

If a lifter is a beginner or there is a long time to train before any given meet the duration of the cycle should be prolonged. Complete Phase "B" of the cycle, take a week layoff and recommence at the beginning again adjusting the length of the base training phase if necessary. It can be adapted in this way to suit any time period, any situation, while all the time building an excellent muscle base.

CONTEST DAY

At the contest conditions will invariably be different from those of a normal workout. Remember to ta these into account, whether you've had to loose much bodyweight, and how your warm ups feel before settli on a sensible choice of poundage for your first attempt. Don't exhaust yourself warming up and take a litt longer in between sets than you have been during workouts. Begin with a couple of very light sets to get th blood flowing and then make good increases using low repetitions. A safe opening attempt should be the poundage you did two doubles with the final heavy workout. In warm up, work up to a paused single with about 95% of this poundage and judge your starting poundage from there. A typical warm up schedule for myself after two doubles with 610 would be: 135x10x10, 225x5, 315x5, 405x3, 475x1 paused, 530x1 paused, 580x1 paused, first attempt 610.

## LIFTING APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

WRIST WRAPS

A good aid for support and for maintaining the wrist in as upright position as possible. Use them wrapped tightly for contest singles and workout sets alike, wrapping well up to the base of the hand. Remove and rewrap after each effort. The I.P.F. permits wraps no greater than 1 meter or 39½ inches in length and 8 cm. or 3.2 inches in width to be worn around the wrists. Even so, I prefer wraps a little less wide and without too much elasticity, finding they bind better and produce a less immediate interruption of circulation to the hand.

SHOES

A solid pair of shoes with a good non-slip sole is an obvious necessity in maintaining a secure foot position during the bench press.

T-SHIRT

I've heard the use of a tight T-shirt recommended many times as a supportive aid for bench pressing. Bench pressing should be a "tight" controlled movement. This is best generated from strongly tensed muscles. A tight T-shirt can possibly help with this feeling but don't forget that **you** do the controlling of the bar.

BELT

I do believe a belt, not pulled quite as tight as it would be for the squat or deadlift, is an asset in helping one feel solid.

CHALK

A firm grip on the bar is important. It's a good practice to always chalk the hands for the heavier sets and lifts. Also, when assuming an arch or acquiring the greatest stability on the bench, it's often necessary to chalk the upper back and buttocks, especially if the bench top is slick.

AMMONIA

"If it helps, sniff it", has always been my motto!